

# **CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES**

**November 17, 1999  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

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The meeting of the California High-Speed Rail Authority was called to order at 10:05 a.m. on November 17, 1999 at the Ronald Reagan Building in Los Angeles, California.

Members Present: Michael Tennenbaum, Chairman  
Edward Graveline, Vice Chairman  
John Fowler  
William Leonard  
Jim Mills  
T. J Stapleton  
Dr. Ernest A. Bates  
Donna Andrews  
Jerry Epstein

## **Approval of Minutes for September 28-29, 1999 Meeting**

Chairman Tennenbaum presented the minutes for approval. Member Leonard moved to approve the minutes. Member Graveline seconded the motion, which carried 9-0.

## **Members Report**

Member Mills reported that he and Executive Director Mehdi Morshed met with two members of the Legislature, Senator Diedre Alpert and Assembly Member Susan Davis. He reported that the focus of each meeting was to brief the Legislators on the work of the Authority and to make them aware that a Business Plan would be presented to both the Legislature and the Governor in January. Member Mills stated that both Senator Alpert and Assembly Member Davis seemed friendly to the idea of a high speed train for California. Member Mills asked Executive Director Morshed if he had anything to add, and he did not.

## **Executive Director Report**

Executive Director Morshed reported that he and Member Donna Andrews met with the Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, Ms. Maria Contreras-Sweet. They presented Secretary Contreras-Sweet an update on the Authority's progress. Executive Director Morshed stated that the Secretary encouraged further updates on the Authority's continuing progress.

## **Authority Members Meetings for Compensation**

Chairman Tennenbaum presented the List of Meetings for Compensation for approval. Member Leonard asked to have a meeting added that he attended but was not listed. Chairman Tennenbaum asked if anyone else had a change, but no other changes were noted. Member

Epstein moved to approve the amended list. Member Fowler seconded the motion, which carried 9-0

### **Approval of Meeting Schedule for 2000.**

Chairman Tennenbaum presented the Meeting Schedule for the year 2000 for approval. At this time, Executive Director Morshed recommended that the December 15, 1999 meeting be held in Fresno since the October meeting was supposed to be held there and was cancelled. And he also recommended that the January 19, 2000 meeting be held in Sacramento. Chairman Tennenbaum noted that he would not be able to attend the March meeting. Executive Director Morshed stated that in January, the March meeting date could be reassessed and possibly changed. Member Graveline moved to approve the meeting schedule, minus the March date. Member Epstein seconded the motion, which carried 9-0.

### **Maglev Deployment Program Update.**

Executive Director Morshed stated that he and Member Andrews and Member Epstein met with Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) staff. He stated that the meeting was a good start at the partnership process since a lot of positive discussion took place during the meeting. Executive Director Morshed asked Member Andrews and Member Epstein if they had anything to add to that, and they did not. Executive Director Morshed then introduced Mr. Al Perdon for his presentation.

Mr. Perdon's presentation included the following: California is one of seven states that have been selected for the planning phase of this program to develop a Maglev proposal that will compete with the other states for funding to deploy Maglev technology somewhere in the U.S. The California High Speed Rail Authority, the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency and SCAG have joined together to pursue this funding program. And in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), they will develop this proposal, which is due in Washington D.C., by June of 2000. The FRA and SCAG are providing the local funds. The role of the Authority is program manager. The final report that goes to the FRA in June, will be under the signature of the Authority in cooperation with SCAG. The BT&H is the signature to the grant. The original application to the FRA was submitted by SCAG and SCAG will continue as the grant administrator. The three entities have formed a Maglev working group, that Executive Director Morshed mentioned. And you have two members from this body, Members Andrews and Epstein. SCAG has two members from their regional council, Mr. Ron Bates and Mr. Bob Bartlett. And the representative from BT&H is John Ferrera, the Assistant Secretary. We have two consultants that have been selected to do the work of this program, Parsons Transportation Group. And SCAG approved Frank Wilson and Associates as the public outreach consultants. The team is in place, the work has begun. There are four specific goals to this program. The overall goal is to deploy a viable high-speed inter-regional service in the corridor. The goal is to employ new Maglev technology, apply that new technology to that corridor. To integrate this new service into existing and other planned services including the services being planned by the Authority for a statewide inter-city high-speed rail. And the immediate goal for this program phase is to complete the detailed project proposal to the FRA by June of 2000. The proposal is about inter-regional high-speed passenger service as well as freight service. The concept of this initial corridor is to connect Los Angeles International Airport with downtown Los Angeles, the San Gabriel Valley, Ontario Airport and March Field in Riverside. The service

that would be provided would be capable of going at speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour. There are some factors that suggest that there is a potential for success in this program. One is that the growth and demand for inter-regional service is very strong, as indicated by SCAG studies over the last several years. Not only the growth and demand, but even the current demand is such that the existing transportation systems, the freeways, et cetera, cannot meet that demand. Airports are having trouble expanding to meet the capacity of passengers. A link connecting these airports is viewed as a potential solution for addressing that issue. And finally, Maglev technology is not in operation of revenue service anywhere in the country. However, the technology has been developed in test operations to suggest that the time may be ready to employ this in revenue operation. The question now is where. Maglev stands for Magnetic Levitation propulsion. There are at least two systems in test operation at this time, one is Germany, the other is in Japan. There are several Maglev technologies in early development in the U.S., those are not as far along as the foreign projects. The decision process involves a completion of the technical studies, securing the community involvement and support for the program, submitting the project description to the FRA and then FRA will make its selection September of next year and hopefully California will be the project. The agreement with the FRA is very specific in terms of what they are looking for in this project description. There are 11 elements that are underway: 1) develop the transportation purpose and significance of this project; 2) develop the system design and engineering factors; 3) technology sourcing and transfer; 4) the system design; 5) operational economic factors; 5) the project benefits; 6) the cost estimates; 7) the partnership potential; 8) management documentation; 9) an environmental assessment that will be prepared as part of this work program; 10) the participation and submission requirements; and 11) project management administration. The chart shows the timeline that those tasks will be undertaken during this current study phase. The work began in September. We are about a month into the process. The working group is holding monthly meetings, and we will be submitting the results of this study to the working group for review and for concurrence. In summary, the status of the project at this point is that the funding for this phase of the program has been secured from FRA and SCAG. Our initial submittal to the FRA, which is a draft report on several sections of the environmental assessment, was submitted on Friday on schedule.

Mr. Perdon then introduces Mr. Charlie DeWeiss from Parsons Transportation and Mr. George Urch from Frank Wilson and Associates.

Mr. DeWeiss states that his work began on September 8, 1999. He further states that his firm is developing ridership, stations, verifying and all alignments and moving forward to prepare the required submissions. There are two key submissions: 1) environmental assessment due to the FRA on February 29, 2000, and 2) project description. The FRA has hired a consultant that is an extension of staff that has established some intermediate dates for submittals.

### **LAX-Palmdale Rail Study**

On behalf of Jim Gosnell, Mr. Hassan Ikarata states that SCAG has received a \$3 million grant to study the viability of a Maglev high-speed train route from LAX to Palmdale through Van Nuys. He further states that the primary objective of such a system, in addition to the increased demand for transportation, is to connect the airport system.

## **Recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature**

Executive Director Morshed states the following:

Over the last two years, the Authority has reviewed the work product, findings and recommendations of the Intercity High-Speed Rail Commission; conducted our own consultant work to enhance that body of knowledge about a high-speed train network in California; and prepared the construction, operations and financing elements of the business plan that is our legislative mandate.

While many of us began this process anticipating that we would prepare a full-funding plan for the development of a high-speed train network for California, it appears that a more prudent course of action is to consider the incremental development and funding of the project.

The key benefits of pursuing an incremental strategy are reducing the risk and uncertainty associated with the project, bringing the project along in discreet phases before making the final decision to go forward with the full project, and initiating any steps we can to preserve the right of way needed for the project.

In keeping with our efforts and mandate—and in order to provide concise, clear and cogent direction to staff and consultants in the final preparation of the draft business plan—the Authority moves to:

- 1) Recommend to the Governor and the Legislature that the development of a high-speed train network should proceed in California.
- 2) Recommend to the Governor and the Legislature that California not proceed to fund the project fully in 2000, either through legislative action or by placing a full-funding proposal on the November 2000 ballot for the voters to decide.
- 3) Recommend instead to the Governor and the Legislature that the Authority proceed with the project on an incremental basis by doing the following:
  - A. Initiate a formal environmental clearance process with a state-level program environmental impact report (EIR)/ federal-level Tier I environmental impact statement (EIS) on the high-speed train network described in this plan (see Figure 1). At the conclusion of the program EIR/Tier I EIS, decision makers can re-evaluate funding options and strategies based on more detailed analyses and information. The financial commitment required to initiate this process is \$25 million over the next two years. If the project is deemed viable at the conclusion of this phase, an additional \$350 million would be required over the following three to four years to achieve full environmental clearance.
  - B. Plan, program and fund intercity and commuter rail improvements that can provide enhanced, higher-speed service to Californians earlier and ultimately become part of the high-speed train network. These improvements should occur concurrent with the environmental studies and engineering work on the high-speed train network.

- C. Begin an aggressive statewide effort to increase federal funding for both conventional and high-speed trains in California. In addition, this effort should include working with the Federal Railroad Administration ( FRA) and high-speed train manufacturers to resolve safety and compatibility issues.
- D. Encourage state, regional and local entities to include high-speed trains in their planning for the future.

The Authority believes this is the most prudent route to take. We can advance the project forward without delay, while becoming more certain about system characteristics and costs, revenues, and environmental challenges ahead. And, with this incremental approach, the Authority will be able to provide a more complete disclosure of system costs and characteristics at the time that we do go forward for full funding.

Member Leonard moved to approve this motion. It was seconded by Member Fowler, which carried a 9-0 vote.

#### **Public Comment**

Mr. Jack LaRochelle, representing Bakersfield, requested a downtown station location for Bakersfield.

Mr. Bob Shaevitz, representing Palmdale, requested a round table discussion with the Authority regarding a possible route to Palmdale.

Mr. John Shields, representing Californians for High-Speed Passenger Rail, recommends to the Authority to request full funding rather than incremental funding.

Mr. Lee Rennacker, recommends that the Authority use a smaller train set.

Mr Kia Mortazavi, representing OCTA, stated he was supportive of incremental funding. Also stated that Orange County is supportive of high-speed rail.

#### **Preliminary Review and Discussion of Selected Sections of the Draft Business Plan**

Executive Director Morshed states that draft versions of Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5 have been provided for comment and that draft versions of the remaining chapters will be ready within the next two weeks. He also states that in addition to those chapters, there will be a Letter of Transmittal, and then an Executive Summary and the drafts of those will be ready soon. He further states that staff will have a full draft Business Plan available to view by the first or second week of January. Executive Director Morshed recommends the Authority to have an extensive public comment period between the release of the draft Business Plan and the final Business Plan. Chairman Tennenbaum suggests that if any Members have comments on the draft chapters, to write them down and submit them to staff within the next couple of days.

#### **Presentation of Benefit Analysis**

Dan Brand, representing Charles River Associates, presents an analysis of the user and non-user benefits of the proposed high-speed train network. A copy of his presentation is available upon request.

**Meeting Adjourned at 1:30 PM.**